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Service

**Wildlife
Services**

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WILDLIFE SERVICES—MAINE

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Maine

Every day, visitors, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Maine Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts. Maine is home to a diverse mix of industrial forest lands, scenic coastal areas, and numerous lakes and rivers that attract many urban and suburban residents from other New England States. These visitors often encounter unwanted wildlife at their campsites and summer homes, and frequently request WS' assistance with animals such as bats, beavers, bears, deer, moose, raccoons, and skunks.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. The WS program shares information with people about reducing their risk of exposure to wildlife-borne diseases and about minimizing wildlife damage to their homes. In addition, WS rents equipment to landowners when deer damage crops, and bears destroy beehives. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others.

Top 3 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting commercial timberlands, State and municipal roads, and highways from flood damage caused by beavers
- Protecting paper mills and industrial buildings from contamination by pigeon fecal matter
- Using electronic fencing to:
 - Protect camps and bee hives from bears
 - Protect sheep and other livestock from coyotes
 - Protect strawberries, vegetables, and commercial truck crops from deer damage

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Maine:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Reducing blackbird damage to livestock barns and feeding sites
- Managing predators to protect livestock and wildlife
- Controlling wildlife vectors of rabies and Chronic Wasting Disease
- Protecting timber and forest resources



Under the Cooperative Beaver Management Program, Maine WS provides *direct assistance* at more than 1,000 problem sites each year, saving more than \$1,300,000 annually in road repairs. To support this and other assistance efforts, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Agricultural Crops—Nearly 60 cooperators participated in the Maine Electric Fencing Rental Program during FY 2004. The program provides commercial producers, hobbyists, and home gardeners with an opportunity to own electric fencing after a 5-year lease period. Through the program, producers can effectively protect crops and livestock while spreading their costs over a 5-year period. More than 350 Maine producers have been assisted by this program since 1991.

Protecting Transportation, Timber and Natural Resources

From Beaver Damage—The Maine Cooperative Beaver Management Program provides an alternative for landowners who want to manage beaver damage that results in flooding to timber, roads, bridges, and property. WS has worked with landowners, towns, State and Federal agencies to develop a cooperative program that provides trained specialists and the appropriate materials to resolve beaver problems. This program has expanded into 12 of Maine's 16 counties since it began in Aroostook County in 1994. WS provides the expertise and landowners contribute funds to cover the labor costs.

Protecting Air Travelers—Deer, Canada geese, gulls, and other wildlife are a major hazard to aircraft throughout Maine. WS Biologists are trained to assess wildlife hazards, provide technical and operational assistance at military airfields and civilian airports. WS Biologists also teach airport staff to identify birds of concern and respond to wildlife problems.

Protecting Public Safety in the Workplace—In fiscal year (FY) 2004, WS assisted several paper mills, a University agricultural complex, and several dairy farms in identifying available options for resolving building damage caused by roosting pigeons. Pigeon droppings damaged roofing, contaminated livestock feeds, machinery, and building floors. WS provided pigeon removal assistance and aided in the development of a management plan to reduce the pigeon problem through cooperator-implemented techniques to exclude birds from buildings.

Protecting the Public From Wildlife Diseases—Maine WS began rabies program work in 2002 in Eastern and Northern Maine. In 2004, three raccoon relative density studies were conducted in Aroostook, Washington, and Penobscot Counties. During the studies raccoons were temporarily immobilized and biological samples were collected for analysis. The animals were then checked for overall health and released at the capture site after they recovered. Biological samples from those animals are submitted to the Maine Department of Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory in Augusta for analysis. To date, none of these animals have ever tested positive for rabies.

WS also assisted the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife in their effort to collect and process 800 hunter provided white-tailed deer samples for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) analysis during both 2003 and 2004. All tests for animals submitted in 2003 were negative. Results for 2004 are pending.

Looking to the Future

WS has received numerous requests from Maine's Atlantic Salmon Commission for assistance with growing double-crested cormorant problems on Atlantic Salmon Rivers. As wild salmon populations continue to decrease, Biologists are increasingly concerned that double-crested cormorant predation on smolts of endangered Atlantic salmon may further reduce wild populations. Collecting information about the migration and feeding patterns of cormorants, as well as their roost sizes and overall population numbers, would help determine whether cormorants are having a significant negative impact on wild Atlantic salmon. This valuable information could help restore a fishing industry that is vital to Washington County's depressed economy.

On land, WS will continue to play an important role in rabies surveillance. Maine borders the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec, where a great deal of concern exists about the spread of rabies from the United States into that country. In addition to providing valuable data for Canada, WS' surveillance efforts in Maine are part of a larger effort to determine the distribution and status of rabies in the United States.

Maine Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

